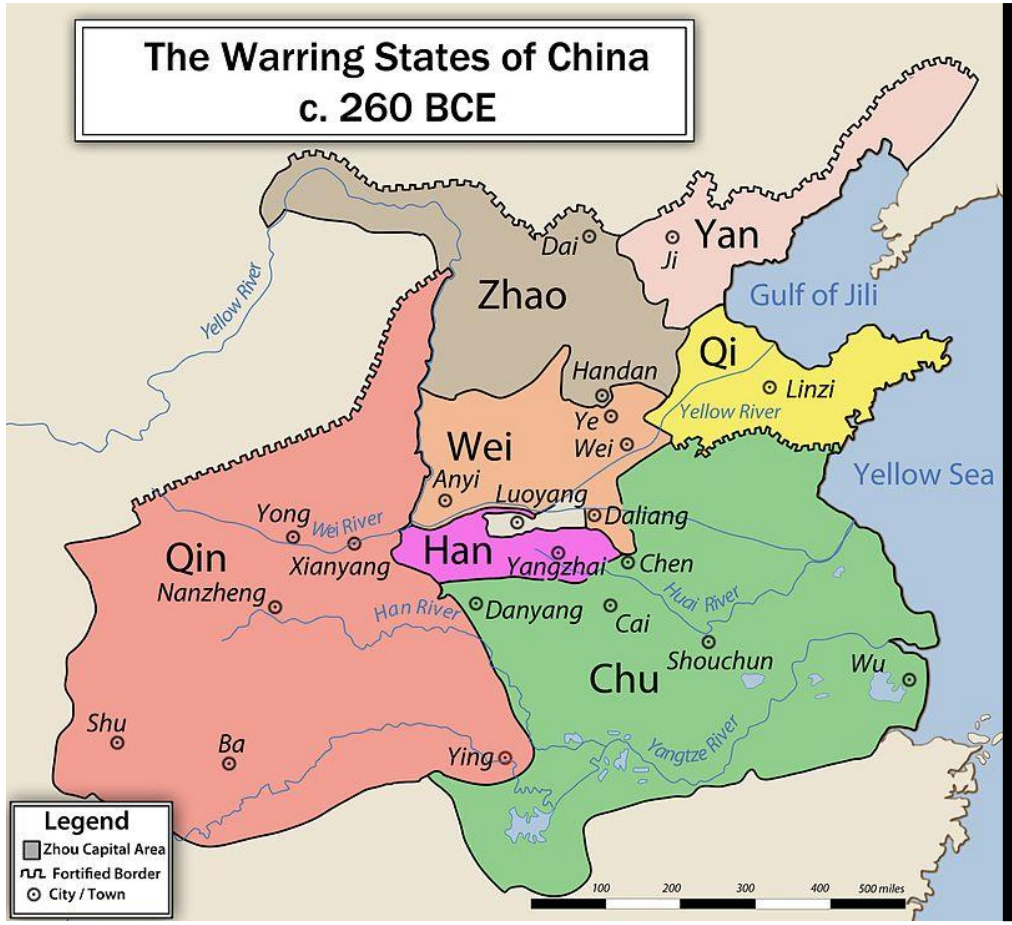
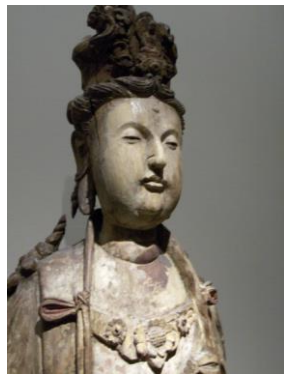
HISTORY OF CHINA

(20 000 BC – 1850 AD)



HISTORY OF CHINA



10,000-year-old pottery, Xianren Cave culture (18,000–7000 BC)

The Xianren Cave

The earliest pottery yet known anywhere in the world was found at this site dating by radiocarbon to between 20,000 and 19,000 years before present, at the end of the Last Glacial Period

Inside the cave

Paleolithic

Neolithic c. 8500 – c. 1500 BC

Xia c. 2070 – c. 1600 BC

Shang c. 1600 – c. 1046 BC

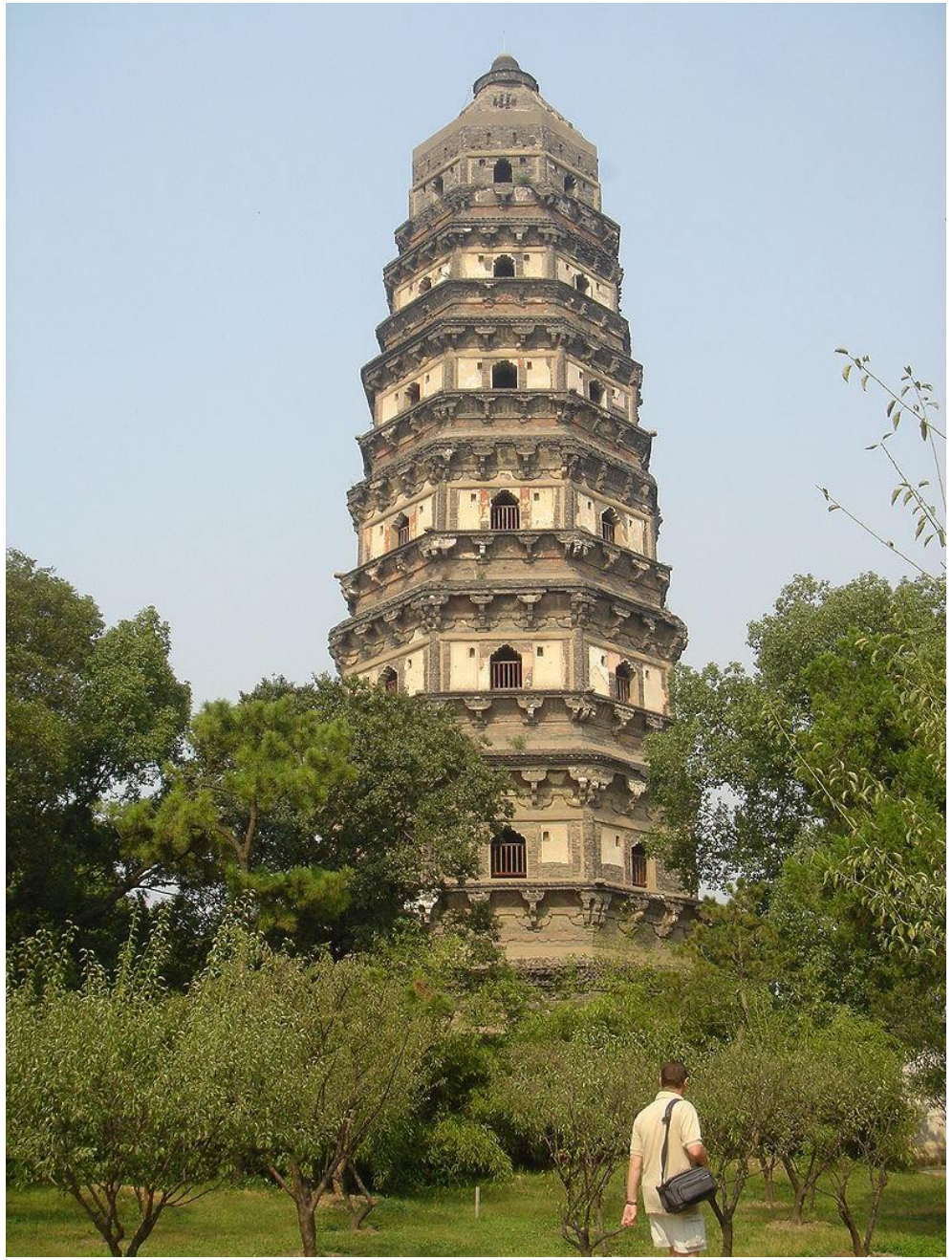
Zhou c. 1046 – 256 BC

Western Zhou

Eastern Zhou

Spring and Autumn

Warring States



Qin 221–207 BC

Han 202 BC – 220 AD

Western Han

Xin

Eastern Han

Three Kingdoms 220–280

Wei, Shu and Wu

Jin 266–420

Western Jin

Eastern Jin

Northern and Southern dynasties

420–589

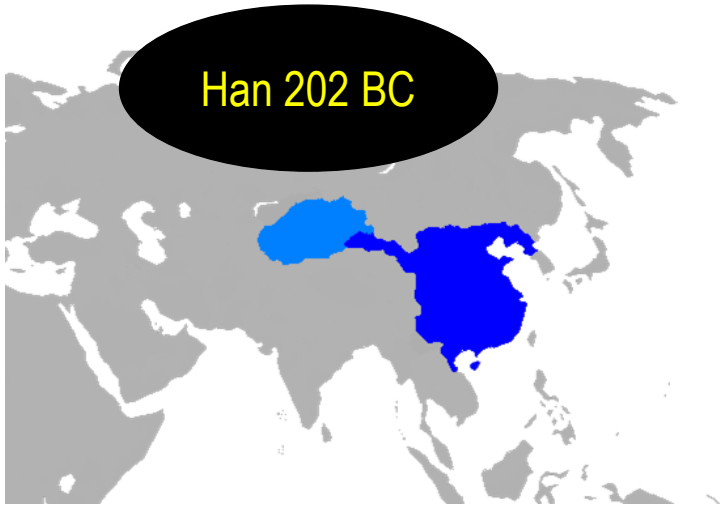
Sui 581–618

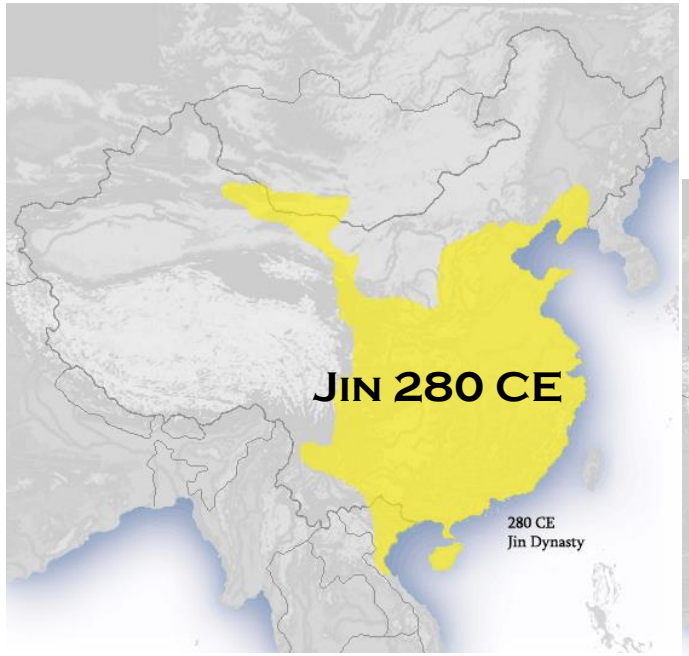
Tang 618–907

Five Dynasties and

Ten Kingdoms

907–979





Southern and Northern Dynasties 440 CE

Three Kingdoms

Xia dynasty (2070–1600 BC)

The Xia dynasty is the first dynasty in traditional Chinese historiography. According to tradition, the Xia dynasty was established by the legendary Yu the Great, after Shun, the last of the Five Emperors, gave the throne to him. In traditional historiography, the Xia was later succeeded by the Shang dynasty. There are no contemporaneous records of the Xia, who are not mentioned in the oldest Chinese texts, since the earliest oracle bone inscriptions date from the late Shang period (13th century BC). The earliest mentions occur in the oldest chapters of the Book of Documents, which report speeches from the early Western Zhou period and are accepted by most scholars as dating from that time. The speeches justify the Zhou conquest of the Shang as the passing of the Mandate of Heaven and liken it to the succession of the Xia by the Shang.

History of China

The earliest known written records of the history of China date from as early as 1250 BC, from the Shang dynasty (c. 1600–1046 BC), during the reign of king Wu Ding, referred to in the records as the twenty-first King of Shang. Ancient historical texts such as the Book of Documents (early chapters, 11th century BC), the Bamboo Annals (c. 296 BC) and the Records of the Grand Historian (c. 91 BC) mention and describe a Xia dynasty (c. 2070–1600 BC) before the Shang, but no writing is known from the period, and Shang writings do not indicate the existence of the Xia. The Shang ruled in the Yellow River valley, which is commonly held to be the cradle of Chinese civilization. However, Neolithic civilizations originated at various cultural centers along both the Yellow River and Yangtze River. These Yellow River and Yangtze civilizations arose millennia before the Shang. With thousands of years of continuous history, China is among the world's oldest civilizations and is regarded as one of the cradles of civilization.

Approximate territories controlled by the various dynasties and states throughout the history of China

Shang dynasty (1600–1046 BC)

Archaeological evidence, such as oracle bones and bronzes, as well as transmitted texts attest to the historical existence of the Shang dynasty (c. 1600–1046 BC). Findings from the earlier Shang period comes from excavations at Erligang, in present-day Zhengzhou. Findings from the later Shang or Yin period, were found in profusion at Anyang, in modern-day Henan, the last of the Shang's capitals. The findings at Anyang include the earliest written record of the Chinese so far discovered: inscriptions of divination records in ancient Chinese writing on the bones or shells of animals—the "oracle bones", dating from around 1250 to 1046 BC.

The Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC)

The Zhou dynasty **(1046–256 BC)** supplanted the Shang, and introduced the concept of the Mandate of Heaven to justify their rule. The central Zhou government began to weaken due to external and internal pressures in the 8th century BC, and the country eventually splintered into smaller states during the Spring and Autumn period. These states became independent and fought with one another in the following Warring States period. Much of traditional Chinese culture, literature and philosophy first developed during those troubled times.

In 221 BC, Qin Shi Huang conquered the various warring states and created for himself the title of Huangdi or "emperor" of the Qin, marking the beginning of imperial China. However, the oppressive government fell soon after his death, and was supplanted by the longer-lived Han dynasty **(206 BC – 220 AD).**

Successive dynasties developed bureaucratic systems that enabled the emperor to control vast territories directly. In the 21 centuries from **206 BC until AD 1912**

A depiction of Yu, the initiator of dynastic rule in China, by the Southern Song court painter Ma Lin.

Yu the Great was a legendary king in ancient China who was famed for his introduction of flood control, his establishment of the Xia dynasty which inaugurated dynastic rule in China, and his upright moral character. He figures prominently in the Chinese legend of "Great Yu Who Controlled the Waters" Dà Yǔ Zhì Shuǐ).

The dates which have been proposed for Yu's reign predate the oldest-known written records in China, the oracle bones of the late Shang dynasty, by nearly a millennium. Yu's name was not inscribed on any artifacts which were produced during the proposed era in which he lived, nor was it inscribed on the later oracle bones; his name was first inscribed on vessels which date back to the Western Zhou period (c. 1045–771 BC). During the reign of Emperor Yao, the Chinese heartland was frequently plagued by floods that prevented further economic and social development. Yu's father, Gun, was tasked with devising a system to control the flooding. He spent more than nine years building a series of dikes and dams along the riverbanks.

Qin Shi Huangdi, first emperor of the Qin Dynasty

In 246 BCE, when King Zhuangxiang died after a short reign of just three years, he was succeeded on the throne by his 13-year-old son.[38] At the time, Zhao Zheng was still young, so Lü Buwei acted as the regent prime minister of the State of Qin, which was still waging war against the other six states. Nine years later, in 235 BCE, Zhao Zheng assumed full power after Lü Buwei was banished for his involvement in a scandal with Queen Dowager Zhao.

Zhao Chengjiao, the Lord Chang'an was Zhao Zheng's legitimate half-brother, by the same father but from a different mother. After Zhao Zheng inherited the throne, Chengjiao rebelled at Tunliu and surrendered to the state of Zhao. Chengjiao's remaining retainers and families were executed by Zhao Zheng. A price of 1 million copper coins was placed on Lao Ai's head if he was taken alive or half a million if dead.[43] Lao Ai's supporters were captured and beheaded; then Lao Ai was tied up and torn to five pieces by horse carriages, while his entire family was executed to the third degree.

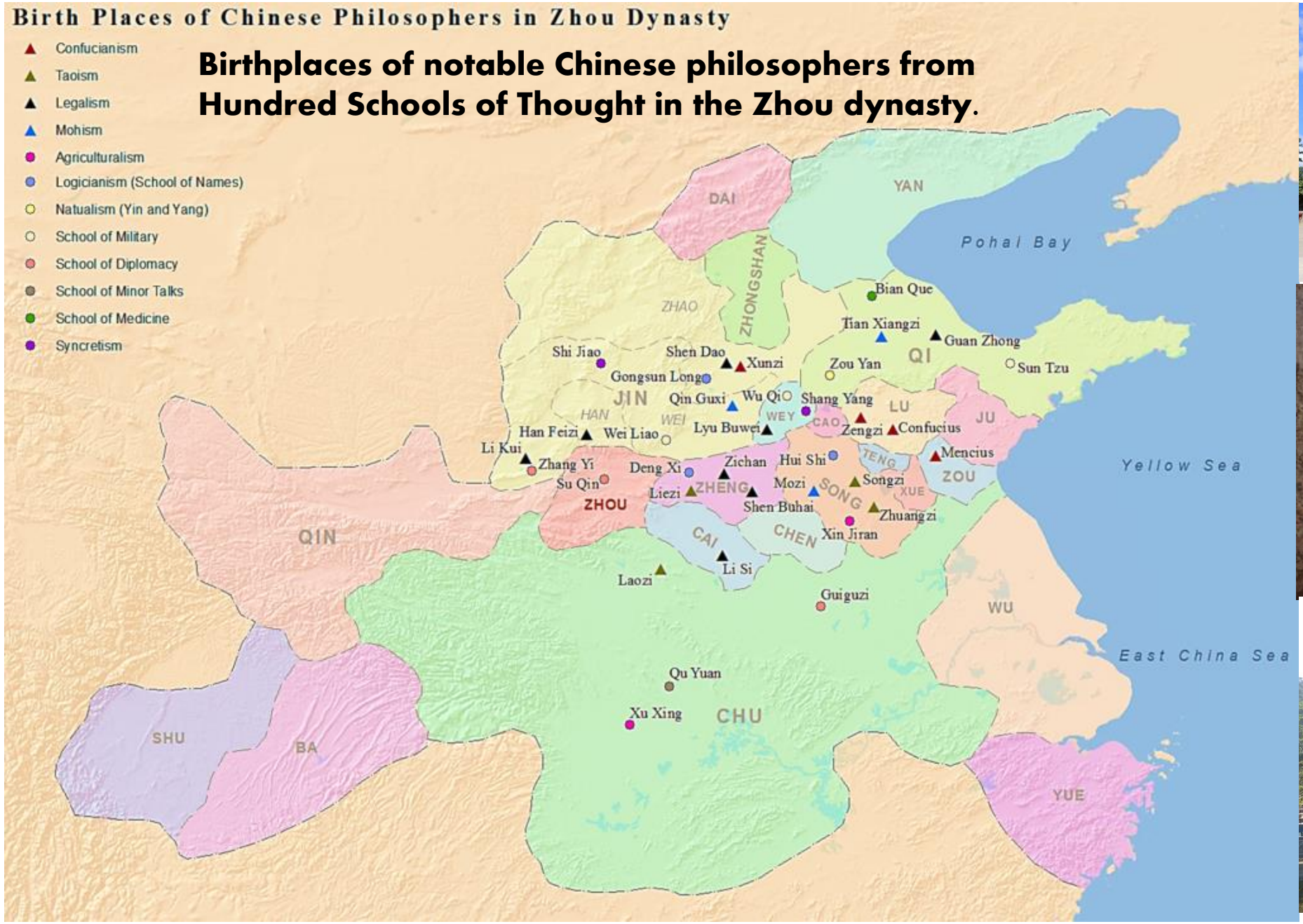
Warring States period (476–221 BC)

After further political consolidation, seven prominent states remained by the end of the 5th century BC, and the years in which these few states battled each other are known as the Warring States period. Though there remained a nominal Zhou king until 256 BC, he was largely a figurehead and held little real power. Numerous developments were made during this period in culture and mathematics. Examples include an important literary achievement, the Zuo zhuan on the Spring and Autumn Annals, which summarizes the preceding Spring and Autumn period, and the bundle of 21 bamboo slips from the Tsinghua collection, which was invented during this period dated to 305 BC, are the world's earliest example of a two digit decimal multiplication table, indicating that sophisticated commercial arithmetic was already established during this period. The state of Qin became dominant in the last century of this period. Qin conquered the state of Shu in the Chengdu Plain, and eventually drove Chu from its home in the Han River valley. Qin copied the administrative reforms of the other states to become a powerhouse. The final expansion in this period began during the reign of Ying Zheng, the king of Qin. His unification of the other six powers enabled him to proclaim himself the First Emperor (Qin Shi Huang).

Spring and Autumn period (722–476 BC)

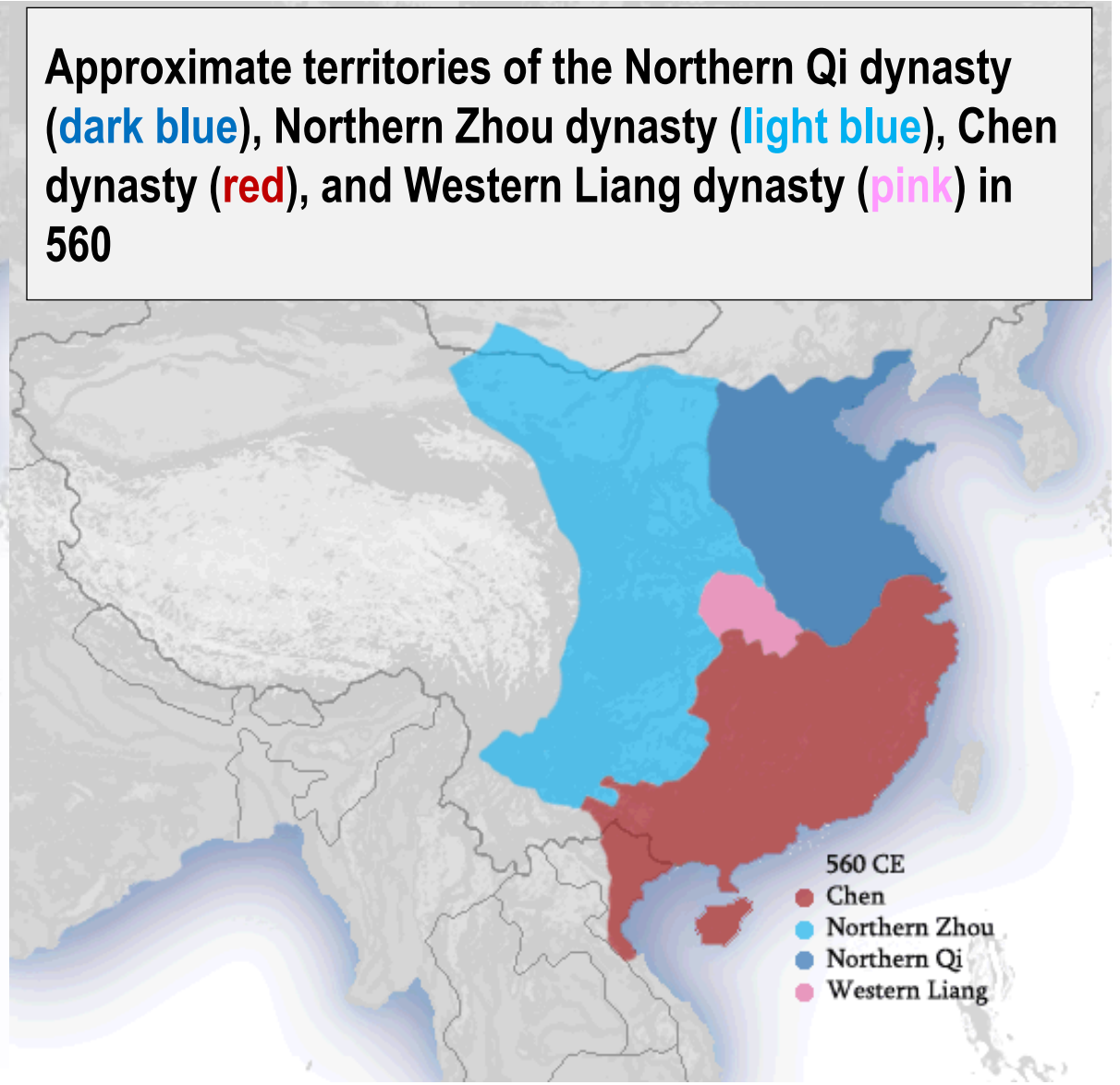
In 771 BC, King You and his forces were defeated in the Battle of Mount Li by rebel states and Quanrong barbarians. The rebel aristocrats established a new ruler, King Ping, in Luoyang, beginning the second major phase of the Zhou dynasty: the Eastern Zhou period, which is divided into the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. The former period is named after the famous Spring and Autumn Annals. The decline of central power left a vacuum. The Zhou empire now consisted of hundreds of tiny states, some of them only as large as a walled town and surrounding land. These states began to fight against one another and vie for hegemony. The more powerful states tended to conquer and incorporate the weaker ones, so the number of states declined over time. By the 6th century BC most small states had disappeared by being annexed and just a few large and powerful principalities remained. Some southern states, such as Chu and Wu, claimed independence from the Zhou, who undertook wars against some of them (Wu and Yue). Many new cities were established in this period and society gradually became more urbanized and commercialized. Many famous individuals such as Laozi, Confucius and Sun Tzu lived during this chaotic period.

The Hundred Schools of Thought of classical Chinese philosophy began blossoming during this period and the subsequent Warring States period. Such influential intellectual movements as Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism and Mohism were founded, partly in response to the changing political world. The first two philosophical thoughts would have an enormous influence on Chinese culture.


Birth Places of Chinese Philosophers in Zhou Dynasty
Confucianism
Taoism
Legalism
Mohism
Agriculturalism
Logicianism (School of Names)
Natualism (Yin and Yang)
School of Military
School of Diplomacy
School of Minor Talks
School of Medicine
Syncretism
Birthplaces of notable Chinese philosophers from Hundred Schools of Thought in the Zhou dynasty.
DAI
YAN
Pohai Bay
ZHONGSHAN
ZHAO
Bian Que
Tian Xiangzi
Guan Zhong
QI
Sun Tzu
Shi Jiao
Shen Dao
Xunzi
Zou Yan
Gongsun Long
JIN
Qin Guxi
Wu Qi
Shang Yang
LU
HAN
WEI
WEY
CAO
JU
Zengzi
Confucius
Han Feizi
Wei Liao
Lyu Buwei
Li Kui
Zhang Yi
Deng Xi
Zichan
Hui Shi
TENG
Mencius
Yellow Sea
Su Qin
ZHENG
Mozi
Songzi
ZOU
XUE
Liezi
ZHOU
SONG
Shen Buhai
Zhuangzi
QIN
CAI
CHEN
Xin Jiran
Li Si
Laozi
Guiguzi
WU
East China Sea
Qu Yuan
Xu Xing
CHU
SHU
BA
YUE

Territory of the Former Qin kingdom and the Jin dynasty in 376.

Approximate territories of the Northern Qi dynasty (dark blue), Northern Zhou dynasty (light blue), Chen dynasty (red), and Western Liang dynasty (pink) in 560

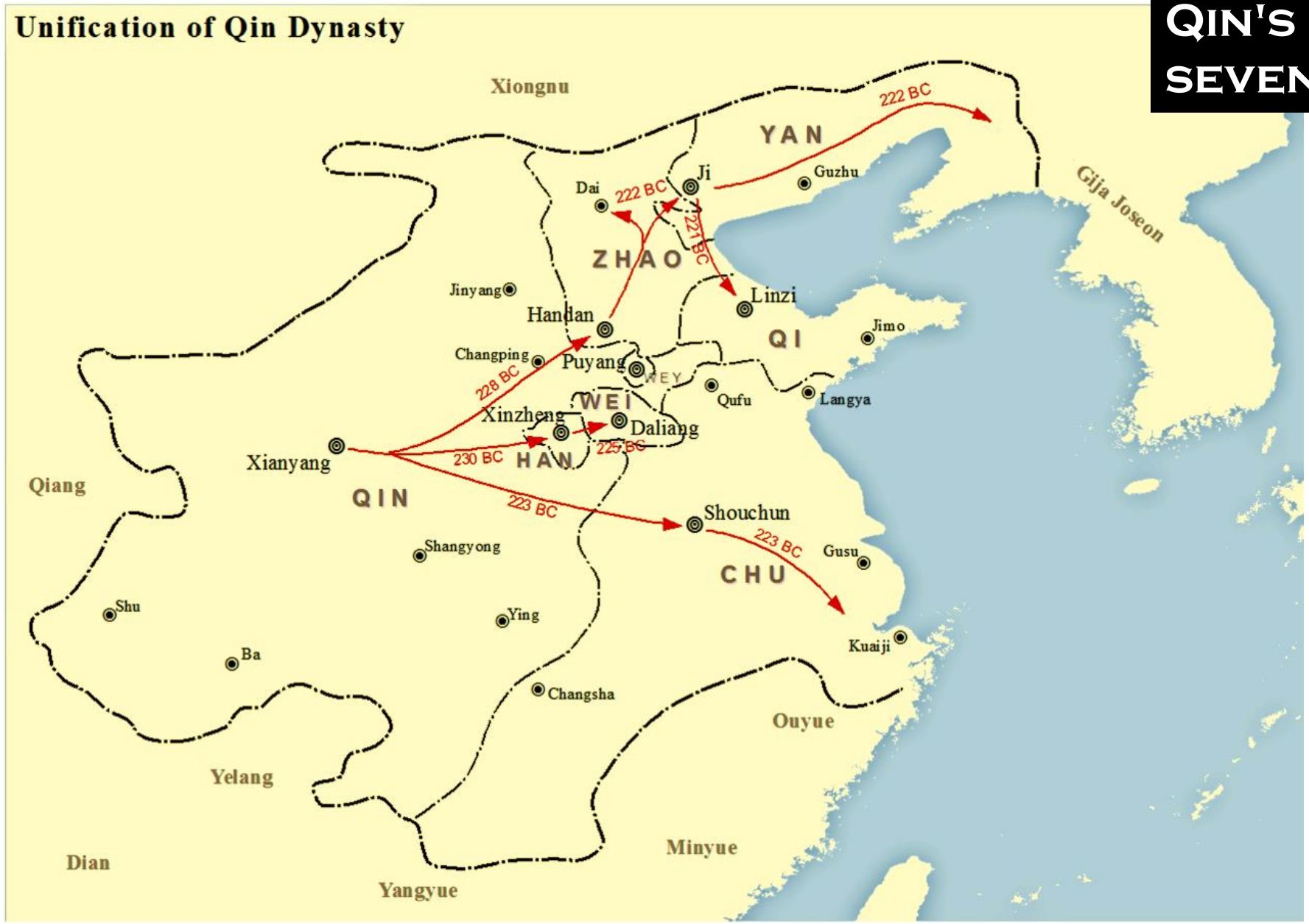


Northern and Southern dynasties

The Northern and Southern dynasties Nán-Běi Cháo) was a period of political division in the history of China that lasted from 420 to 589, following the tumultuous era of the Sixteen Kingdoms and the Eastern Jin dynasty. It is sometimes considered as the latter part of a longer period known as the Six Dynasties (220–589). Albeit an age of civil war and political chaos, it was also a time of flourishing arts and culture, advancement in technology, and the spread of Mahayana Buddhism and Daoism. The period saw large-scale migration of the Han people to the lands south of the Yangtze. The period came to an end with the unification of all of China proper by Emperor Wen of the Sui dynasty.

During this period, the process of sinicization accelerated among the non-Han ethnicities in the north and among the indigenous peoples in the south. This process was also accompanied by the increasing popularity of Buddhism (introduced into China in the 1st century) in both northern and southern China and Daoism gaining influence as well, with two essential Daoist canons written during this period.

Qin's unification of seven warring states



In 230 BCE, King Zheng unleashed the final campaigns of the Warring States period, setting out to conquer the remaining independent kingdoms, one by one. The first state to fall was Hán. Qin armies conquered the state of Zhao in 228 BCE. In 222 BCE, the last remnants of Yan and the royal family were captured in Liaodong in the northeast. In 221 BCE, the Qin armies invaded from the north, captured the king, and annexed Qi.

Map of the Qin dynasty and its administrative divisions

Administrative reforms

In an attempt to avoid a recurrence of the political chaos of the Warring States period, Qin Shi Huang and his prime minister Li Si completely abolished feudalism. The empire was then divided into 36 commanderies, later more than 40 commanderies. The whole of China was thus divided into administrative units: first commanderies, then counties , townships , Xiāng) and hundred-family units (, Li, which roughly corresponds to the modern-day subdistricts and communities). This system was different from the previous dynasties, which had loose alliances and federations. People could no longer be identified by their native region or former feudal state, as when a person from Chu was called "Chu person" , Chu rén). Appointments were subsequently based on merit instead of hereditary rights.

Lifelike terracotta soldier statues from the Terracotta Army, discovered near modern Xi'an, which was meant to guard the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor

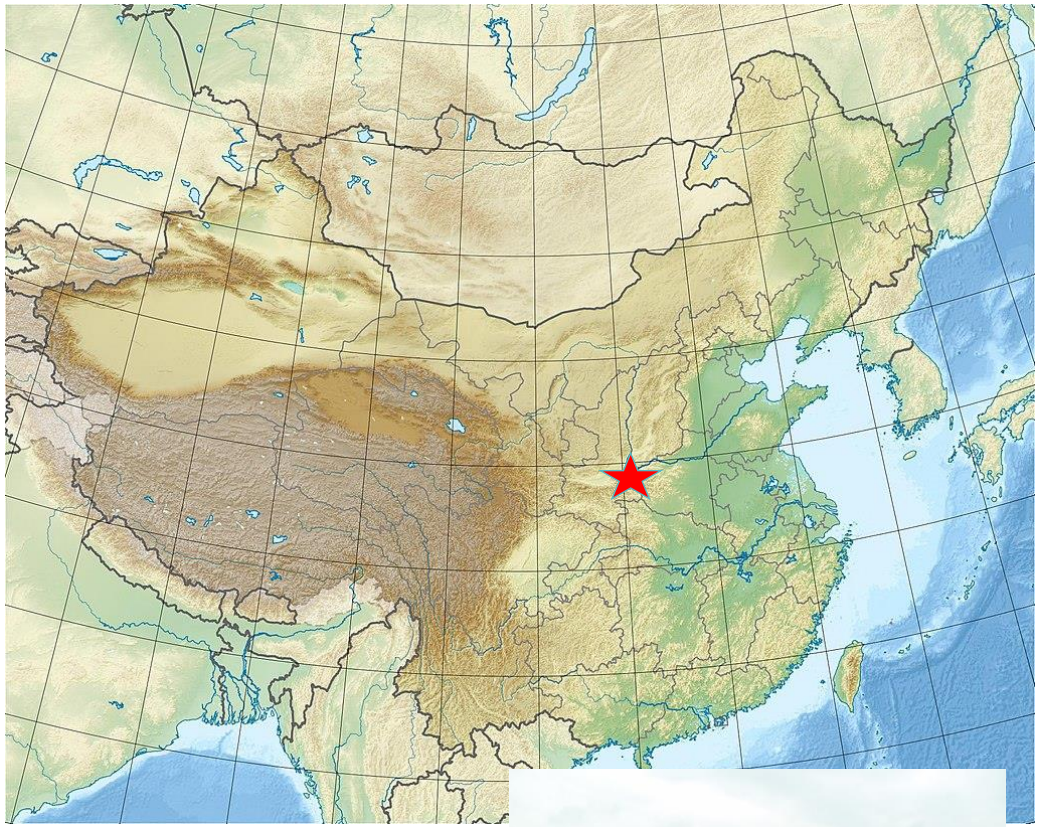
Army of Northern Wei terracotta soldiers in Xianbei uniform, tomb of Sima Jinlong, 484 CE.

20

Terracotta Army

The Terracotta Army is a collection of terracotta sculptures depicting the armies of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China. It is a form of funerary art buried with the emperor in **210–209 BCE** with the purpose of protecting the emperor in his afterlife.

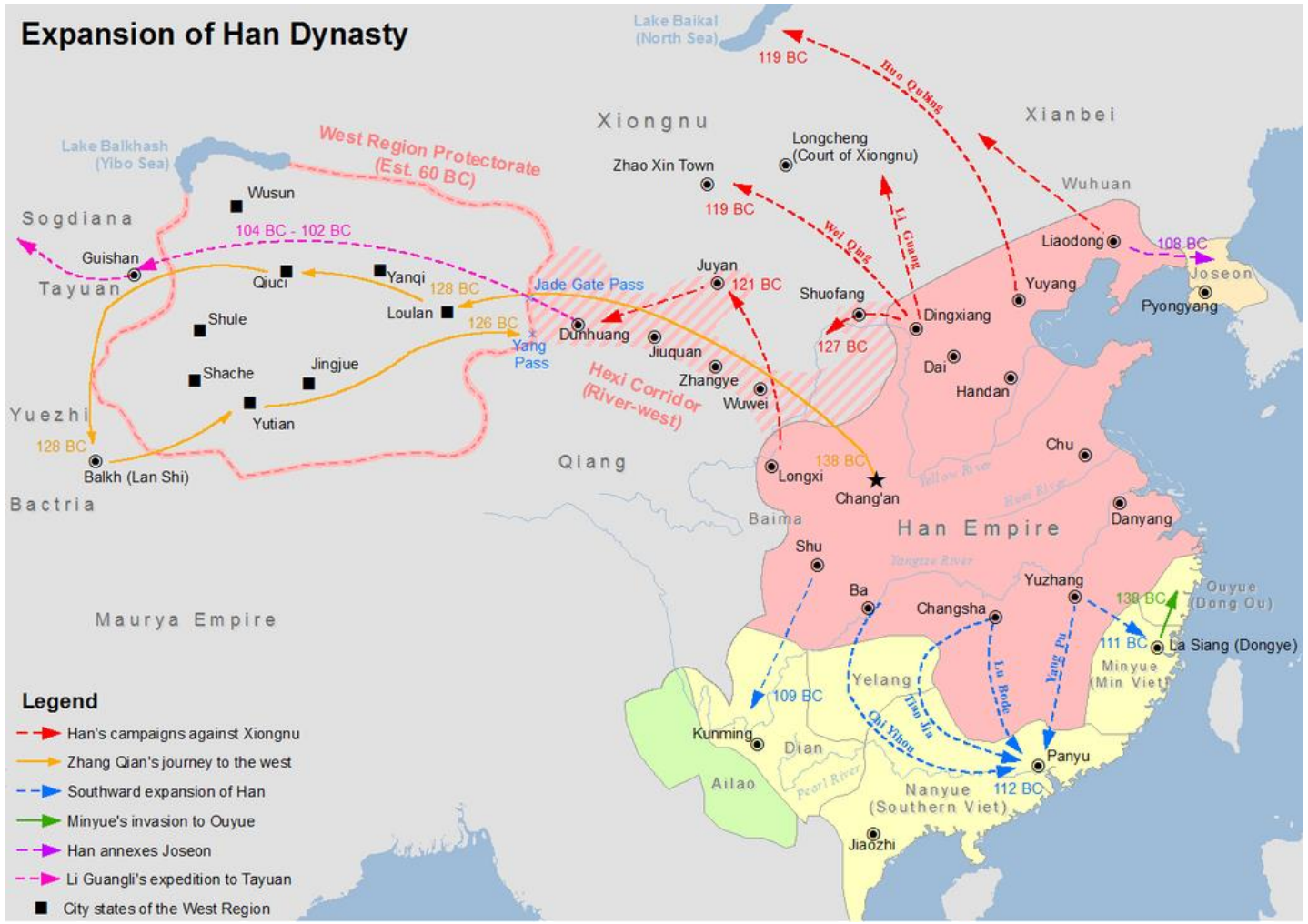
The figures, dating from approximately the late third century BCE, were discovered in 1974 by local farmers in Lintong County, outside Xi'an, Shaanxi, China. The figures vary in height according to their roles, the tallest being the generals. The figures include warriors, chariots and horses. Estimates from 2007 were that the three pits containing the Terracotta Army held more than **8,000 soldiers, 130 chariots with 520 horses, and 150 cavalry horses,** the majority of which remained buried in the pits near Qin Shi Huang's mausoleum. Other terracotta non-military figures were found in other pits, including officials, acrobats, strongmen, and musicians.



Qin dynasty (221–206 BC)

Though the unified reign of Qin Shi Huang, the first Qin emperor, lasted only 12 years, he managed to subdue great parts of what constitutes the core of the Han Chinese homeland and to unite them under a tightly centralized Legalist government seated at Xianyang (close to modern Xi'an). The doctrine of Legalism that guided the Qin emphasized strict adherence to a legal code and the absolute power of the emperor. This philosophy, while effective for expanding the empire in a military fashion, proved unworkable for governing it in peacetime. The Qin Emperor presided over the brutal silencing of political opposition, including the event known as the burning of books and burying of scholars. This would be the impetus behind the later Han synthesis incorporating the more moderate schools of political governance. After Qin Shi Huang's death the Qin government drastically deteriorated and eventually capitulated in 207 BC after the Qin capital was captured and sacked by rebels, which would ultimately lead to the establishment of the Han Empire.

Han dynasty (206 BC – AD 220)



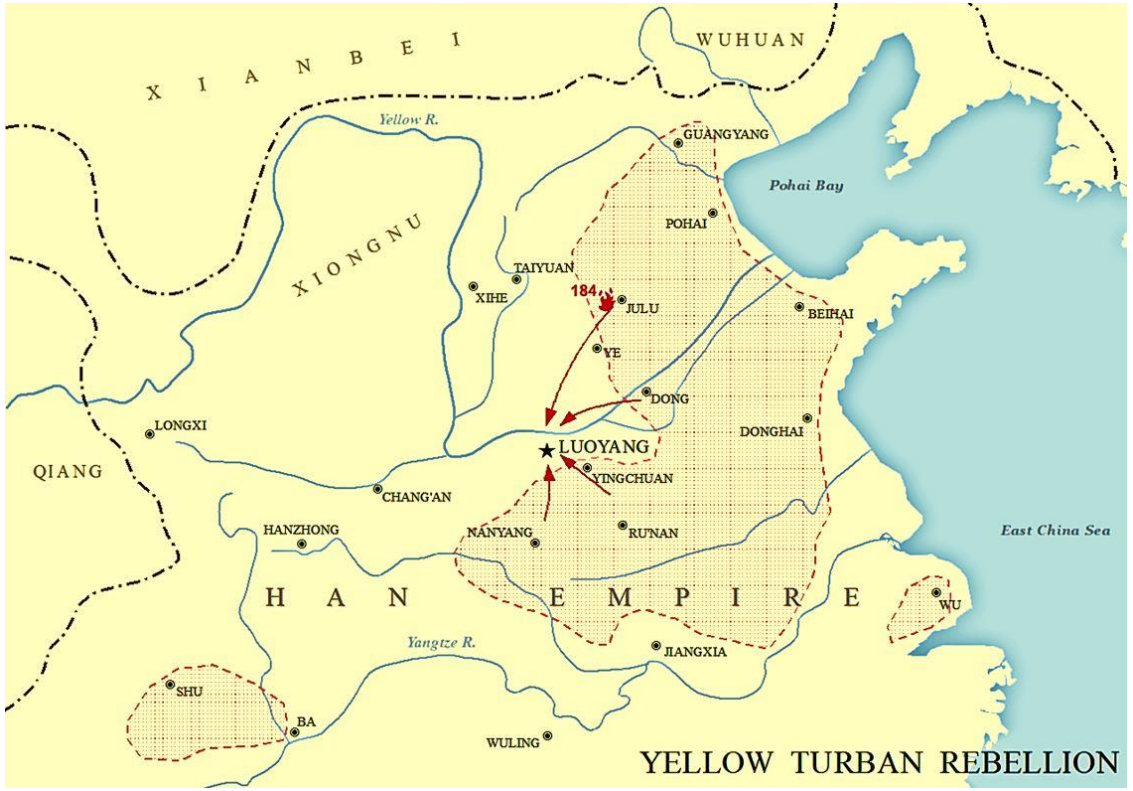
Map showing the expansion of Han dynasty in the 2nd century BC

The Han dynasty was founded by Liu Bang, who emerged victorious in the Chu–Han Contention that followed the fall of the Qin dynasty. A golden age in Chinese history, the Han dynasty's long period of stability and prosperity consolidated the foundation of China as a unified state under a central imperial bureaucracy, which was to last intermittently for most of the next two millennia. During the Han dynasty, territory of China was extended to most of the China proper and to areas far west. Confucianism was officially elevated to orthodox status and was to shape the subsequent Chinese civilization. Art, culture and science all advanced to unprecedented heights.

Three Kingdoms (AD 220–280)

By the 2nd century, the empire declined amidst land acquisitions, invasions, and feuding between consort clans and eunuchs. The Yellow Turban Rebellion broke out in AD 184, ushering in an era of warlords. In the ensuing turmoil, three states emerged, trying to gain predominance and reunify the land, giving this historical period its name. The classic historical novel Romance of the Three Kingdoms dramatizes events of this period. The warlord Cao Cao reunified the north in 208, and in 220 his son accepted the abdication of Emperor Xian of Han, thus initiating the Wei dynasty. Soon, Wei's rivals Shu and Wu proclaimed their independence. This period was characterized by a gradual decentralization of the state that had existed during the Qin and Han dynasties, and an increase in the power of great families. In 266, the Jin dynasty overthrew the Wei and later unified the country in 280, but this union was short-lived.

The Yellow Turban Rebellion, also translated as the Yellow Scarves Rebellion, was a peasant revolt in China against the Eastern Han dynasty. The uprising broke out in 184 AD during the reign of Emperor Ling.

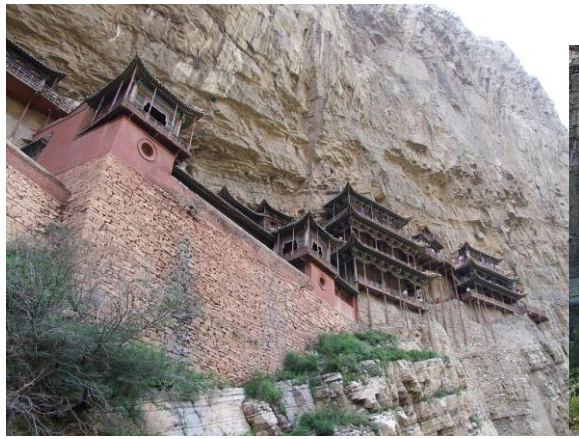


Jin dynasty (AD 266–420)

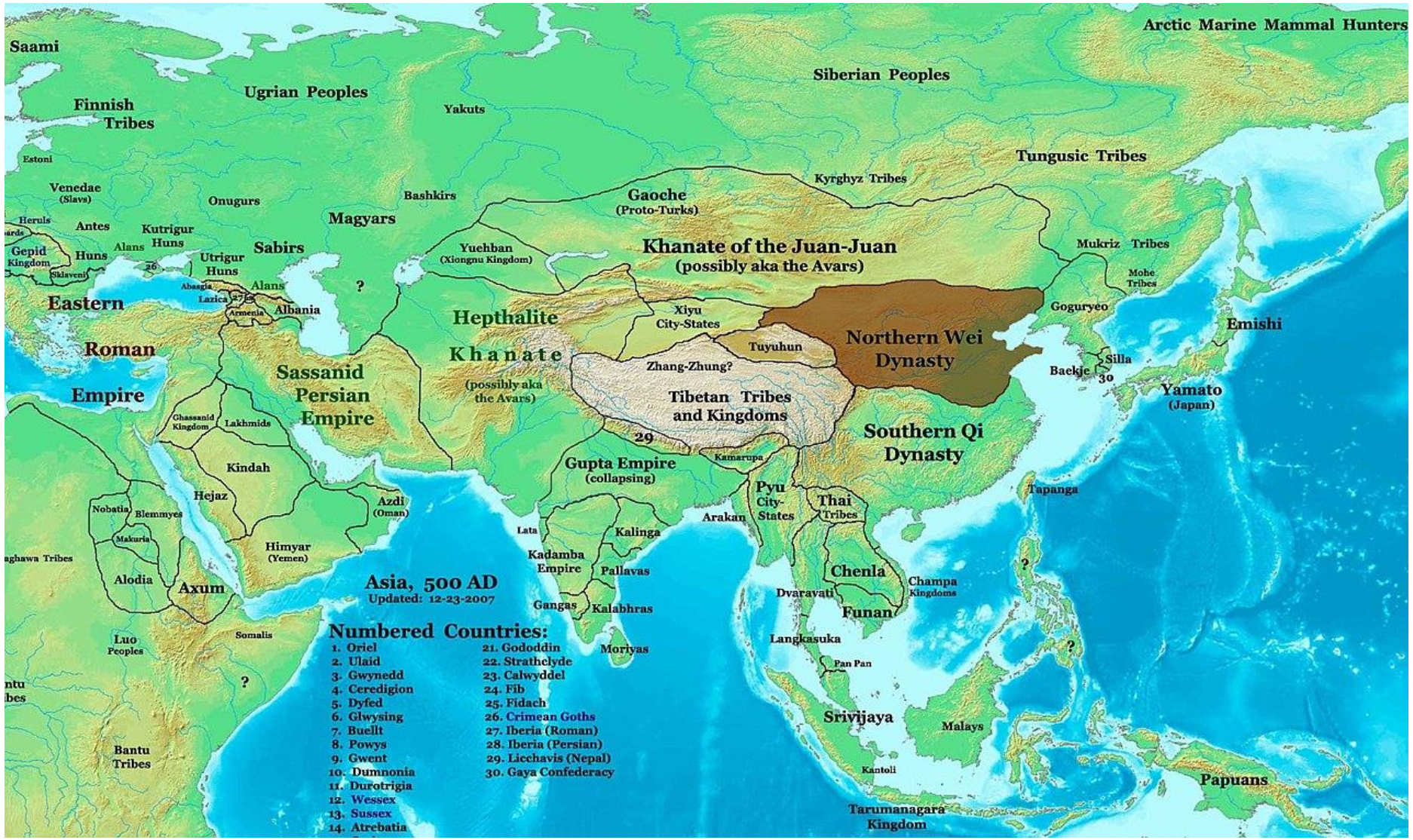
The Jin dynasty was severely weakened by internecine fighting among imperial princes and lost control of northern China after non-Han Chinese settlers rebelled and captured Luoyang and Chang'an. In 317, a Jin prince in modern-day Nanjing became emperor and continued the dynasty, now known as the Eastern Jin, which held southern China for another century. Prior to this move, historians refer to the Jin dynasty as the Western Jin.Northern China fragmented into a series of independent kingdoms, most of which were founded by Xiongnu, Xianbei, Jie, Di and Qiang rulers. These non-Han peoples were ancestors of the Turks, Mongols, and Tibetans. During the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms, warfare ravaged the north and prompted large-scale Han Chinese migration south to the Yangtze River Basin and Delta.

Northern and Southern dynasties (AD 420–589)

In the early 5th century, China entered a period known as the Northern and Southern dynasties, in which parallel regimes ruled the northern and southern halves of the country. In the south, the Eastern Jin gave way to the Liu Song, Southern Qi, Liang and finally Chen. Each of these Southern dynasties were led by Han Chinese ruling families and used Jiankang (modern Nanjing) as the capital. They held off attacks from the north and preserved many aspects of Chinese civilization, while northern barbarian regimes began to sinify.



Rise of Northern Wei (386–535) and the Sinicization movement



Asia in 500 AD, showing Northern Wei territories and their neighbors

The first of the Northern dynasties, it ruled northern China from 386 to 535 during the period of the Northern and Southern dynasties. Described as "part of an era of political turbulence

Sixteen Kingdoms (304–439)

In the north, the last of the Sixteen Kingdoms was extinguished in 439 by the Northern Wei, a kingdom founded by the Xianbei, a nomadic people who unified northern China. The Northern Wei eventually split into the Eastern and Western Wei, which then became the Northern Qi and Northern Zhou. These regimes were dominated by Xianbei or Han Chinese who had married into Xianbei families. During this period most Xianbei people adopted Han surnames, eventually leading to complete assimilation into the Han. Despite the division of the country, Buddhism spread throughout the land. In southern China, fierce debates about whether Buddhism should be allowed were held frequently by the royal court and nobles. By the end of the era, Buddhists and Taoists had become much more tolerant of each other.

Sui dynasty (581–618)

The short-lived Sui dynasty was a pivotal period in Chinese history. Founded by Emperor Wen in 581 in succession of the Northern Zhou, the Sui went on to conquer the Southern Chen in 589 to reunify China, ending three centuries of political division. The Sui pioneered many new institutions, including the government system of Three Departments and Six Ministries, imperial examinations for selecting officials from commoners, while improved on the systems of fubing system of the army conscription and the Equal-field system of land distributions. These policies, which were adopted by later dynasties, brought enormous population growth, and amassed excessive wealth to the state. The Grand Canal was constructed, linking the capitals Daxing (Chang'an) and Luoyang to the wealthy southeast region, and in another route, to the northeast border. The Great Wall was also expanded, while series of military conquests and diplomatic maneuvers further pacified its borders.

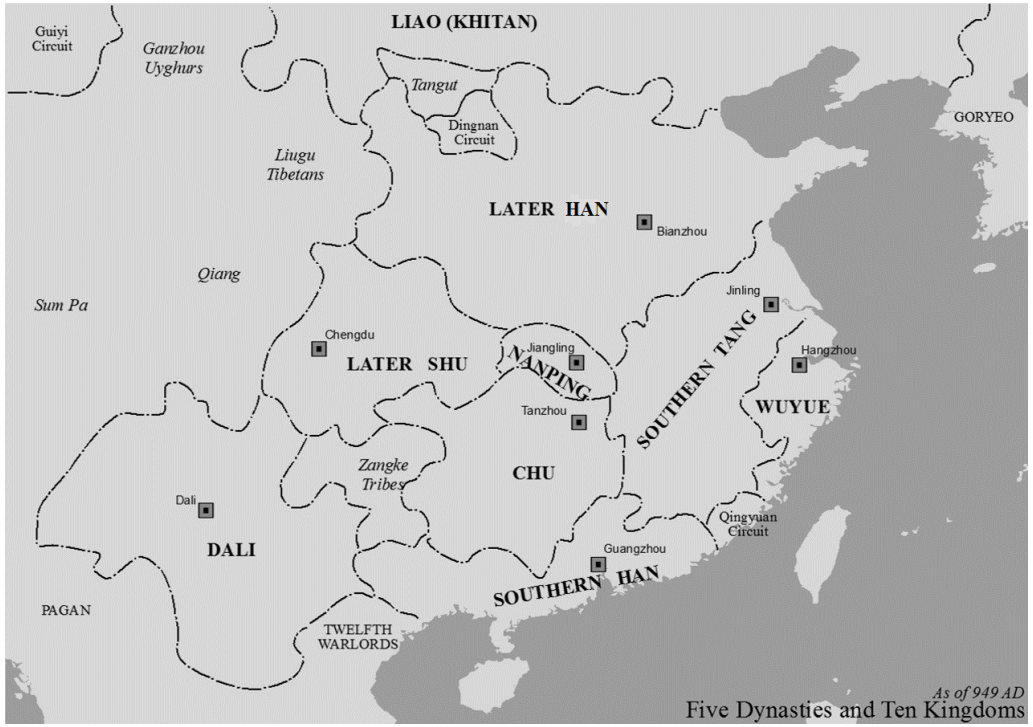
Tang dynasty (618–907)

The Tang dynasty was a golden age of Chinese civilization, a prosperous, stable, and creative period with significant developments in culture, art, literature, particularly poetry, and technology. Buddhism became the predominant religion for the common people. Chang'an (modern Xi'an), the national capital, was the largest city in the world during its time. The first emperor, Emperor Gaozu, came to the throne on 18 June 618, placed there by his son, Li Shimin, who became the second emperor, Taizong, one of the greatest emperors in Chinese history. Combined military conquests and diplomatic maneuvers reduced threats from Central Asian tribes, extended the border, and brought neighboring states into a tributary system. Military victories in the Tarim Basin kept the Silk Road open, connecting Chang'an to Central Asia and areas far to the west. In the south, lucrative maritime trade routes from port cities such as Guangzhou.

Tang Dynasty in 669 AD

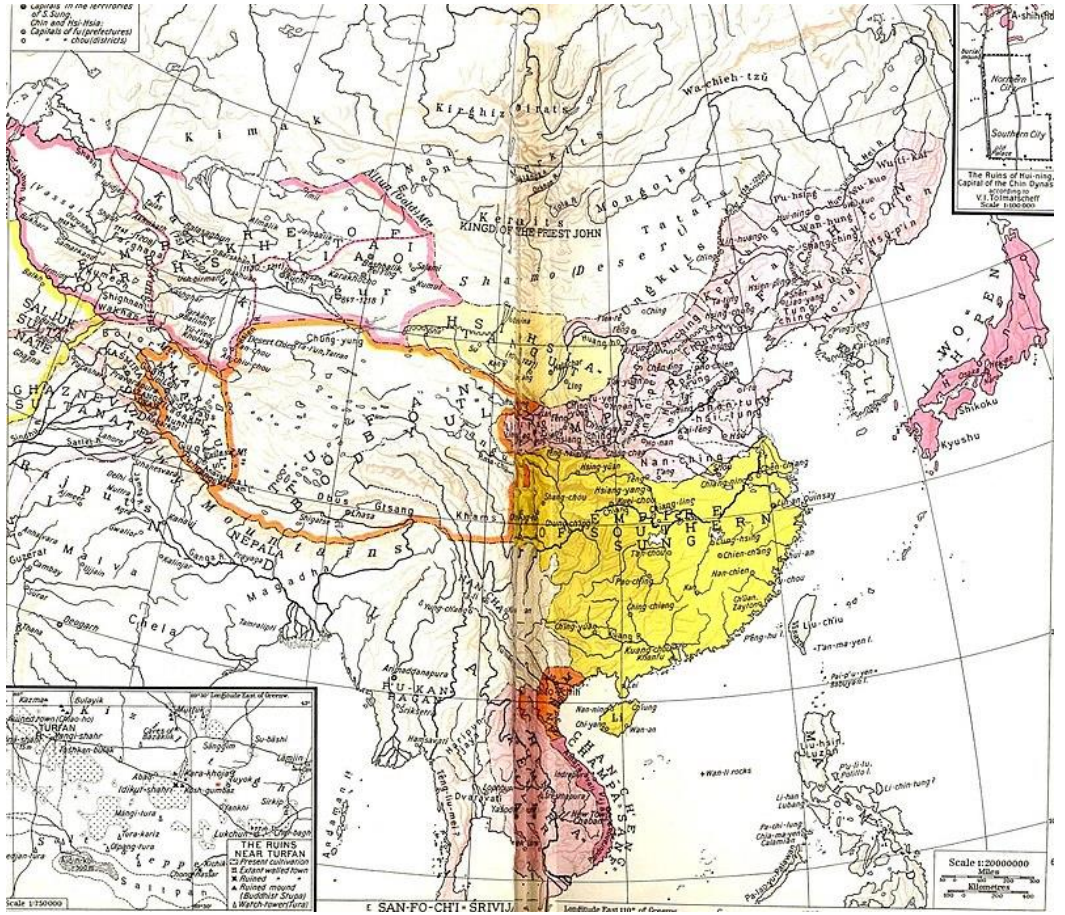
Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907–960)

The period of political disunity between the Tang and the Song, known as the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, lasted from 907 to 960. During this half-century, China was in all respects a multi-state system. Five regimes, namely, (Later) Liang, Tang, Jin, Han and Zhou, rapidly succeeded one another in control of the traditional Imperial heartland in northern China. Among the regimes, rulers of (Later) Tang, Jin and Han were sinicized Shatuo Turks, which ruled over the ethnic majority of Han Chinese. More stable and smaller regimes of mostly ethnic Han rulers coexisted in south and western China over the period, cumulatively constituted the "Ten Kingdoms". Amidst political chaos in the north, the strategic Sixteen Prefectures (region along today's Great Wall) were ceded to the emerging Khitan Liao dynasty, which drastically weakened the defense of the China proper against northern nomadic empires. Vietnam gained lasting independence after being a Chinese prefecture for many centuries.

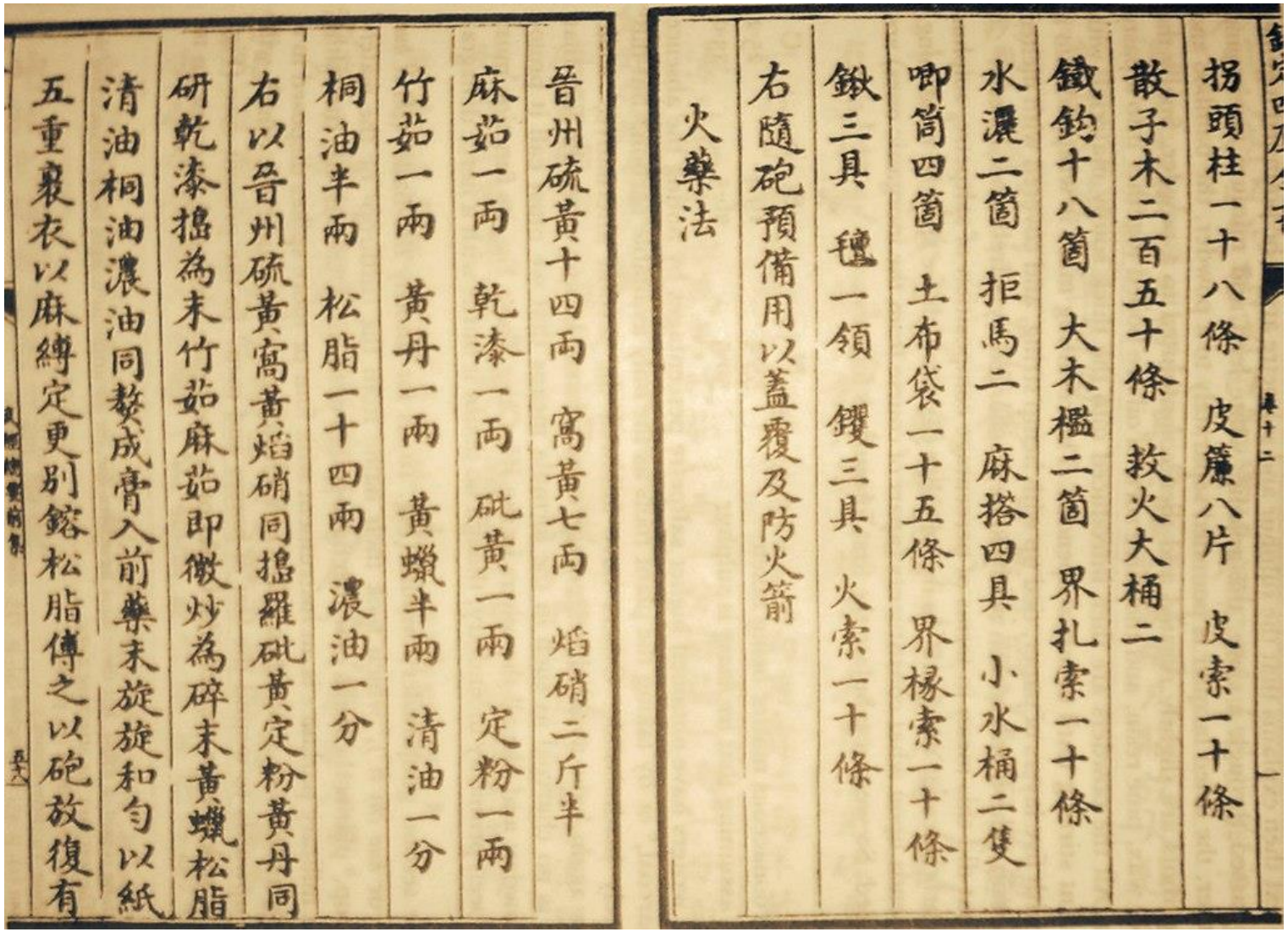


Song, Liao, Jin, and Western Xia dynasties (960–1279)

In 960, the Song dynasty was founded by Emperor Taizu, with its capital established in Kaifeng (also known as Bianjing). In 979, the Song dynasty reunified most of the China proper, while large swaths of the outer territories were occupied by sinicized nomadic empires. The Khitan Liao dynasty, which lasted from 907 to 1125, ruled over Manchuria, Mongolia, and parts of Northern China. Meanwhile, in what are now the north-western Chinese provinces of Gansu, Shaanxi, and Ningxia, the Tangut tribes founded the Western Xia dynasty from 1032 to 1227. Within the Liao Empire, the Jurchen tribes revolted against their overlords to establish the Jin dynasty in 1115. In 1125, the devastating Jin cataphract annihilated the Liao dynasty, while remnants of Liao court members fled to Central Asia to found the Qara Khitai Empire (Western Liao dynasty). Jin's invasion of the Song dynasty followed swiftly. In 1127, Kaifeng was sacked, a massive catastrophe known as the Jingkang Incident, ending the Northern Song dynasty.



Earliest known written formula for GUNPOWDER



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麻茹一兩　乾漆一兩　砒黃一兩　定粉一兩
竹茹一兩　黃丹一兩　黃蠟半兩　清油一分
桐油半兩　松脂一十四兩　濃油一分
右以晉州硫黃窩黃焰硝同搗羅砒黃定粉黃丹同
研乾漆搗為末竹茹麻茹即微炒為碎末黃蠟松脂
清油桐油濃油同熬成膏入前藥末旋旋和勻以紙
五重裹衣以麻縛定更別鎔松脂傳之以砲放復有

拐頭柱一十八條　皮簾八片　皮索一十條
散子木二百五十條　救火大桶二
鐵鈎十八箇　大木榷二箇　界扎索一十條
水濺二箇　拒馬二　麻搭四具　小水桶二隻
唧筒四箇　土布袋一十五條　界椽索一十條
鍬三具　鐷一領　鑊三具　火索一十條
右隨砲預備用以蓋覆及防火箭

火藥法

Earliest known written formula for gunpowder, from the Wujing Zongyao of 1044 AD.

Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)

The Yuan dynasty was formally proclaimed in 1271, when the Great Khan of Mongol, Kublai Khan, one of the grandsons of Genghis Khan, assumed the additional title of Emperor of China, and considered his inherited part of the Mongol Empire as a Chinese dynasty. In the preceding decades, the Mongols had conquered the Jin dynasty in Northern China, and the Southern Song dynasty fell in 1279 after a protracted and bloody war. The Mongol Yuan dynasty became the first conquest dynasty in Chinese history to rule the entire China proper and its population as an ethnic minority. The dynasty also directly controlled the Mongolian heartland and other regions, inheriting the largest share of territory of the divided Mongol Empire, which roughly coincided with the modern area of China and nearby regions in East Asia. Before the Mongol invasion, Chinese dynasties reported approximately 120 million inhabitants; after the conquest had been completed in 1279, the 1300 census reported roughly 60 million people.

Collaborating with Hou Ji

Collaborating with Hou Ji, a semi-mythical agricultural master, Yu successfully devised a system of flood controls that were crucial in establishing the prosperity of the Chinese heartland. Instead of directly damming the rivers' flow, Yu made a system of irrigation canals which relieved floodwater into fields, as well as spending great effort dredging the riverbeds. Yu is said to have eaten and slept with the common workers and spent most of his time personally assisting the work of dredging the silty beds of the rivers for the thirteen years the projects took to complete. The dredging and irrigation were successful, and allowed ancient Chinese culture to flourish along the Yellow River, Wei River, and other waterways of the Chinese heartland. The project earned Yu renown throughout Chinese history, and is referred to in Chinese history as "Great Yu Controls the Waters" Dà Yǔ Zhì Shuǐ). In particular, Mount Longmen along the Yellow River had a very narrow channel which blocked water from flowing freely east toward the ocean. Yu is said to have brought a large number of workers to open up this channel, which has been known ever since as "Yu's Gateway"

Hou Ji (or Houji; Hòu Jì; Wade–Giles: Hou Chi) was a legendary Chinese culture hero credited with introducing millet to humanity during the time of the Xia dynasty.

Emperor Xiaowen and his entourage worshipping the Buddha 522-523 CE.
Central Binyang Cave (also known as Cave 3) in the Longmen complex

Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei

Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei(October 13, 467 – April 26, 499), personal name né Tuoba Hong later Yuan Hong , was an emperor of the Northern Wei from September 20, 471 to April 26, 499. Under the regent of Empress Dowager Feng, Emperor Xiaowen enacted a new land-tenure system named the equal-field system in 485, which was aimed at boosting agricultural production and tax receipts.

Emperor
- 386–409

Emperor Daowu
- 409-423

Emperor Mingyuan
- 424–452

Emperor Taiwu
- 452–465

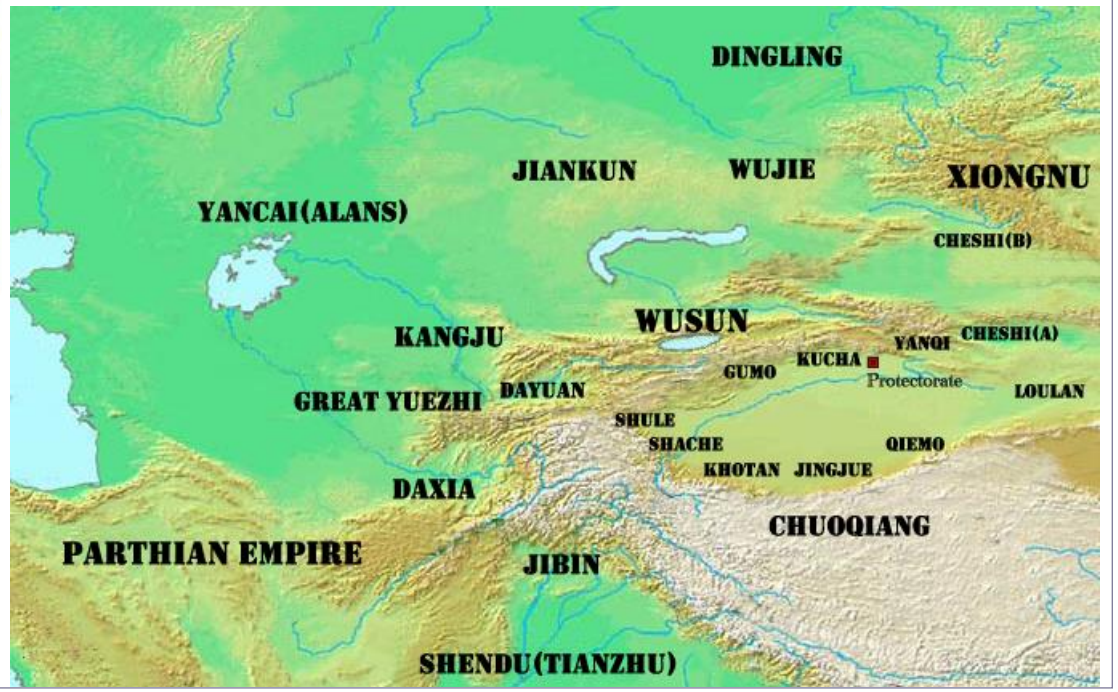
Emperor Wencheng
- 471–499

Emperor Xiaowen
- 499–515

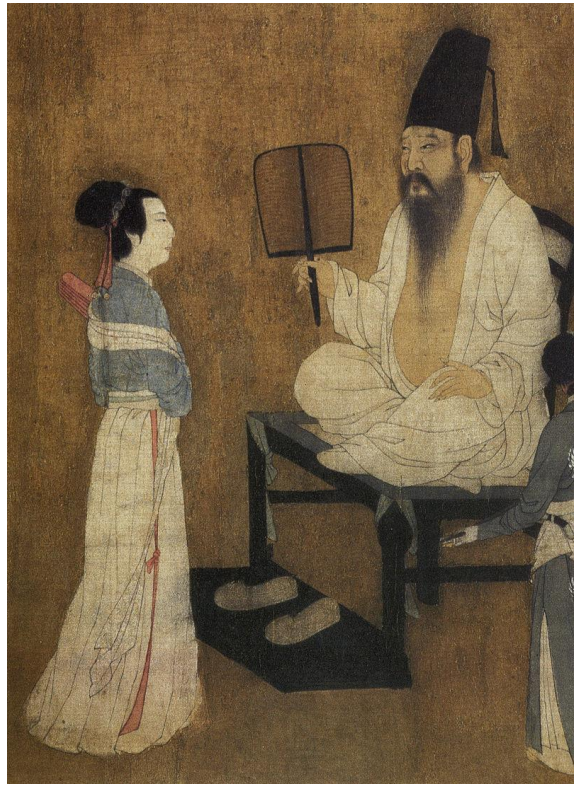
Emperor Xuanwu
- 528–530

Emperor Xiaozhuang
- 532–535

Emperor Xiaowu

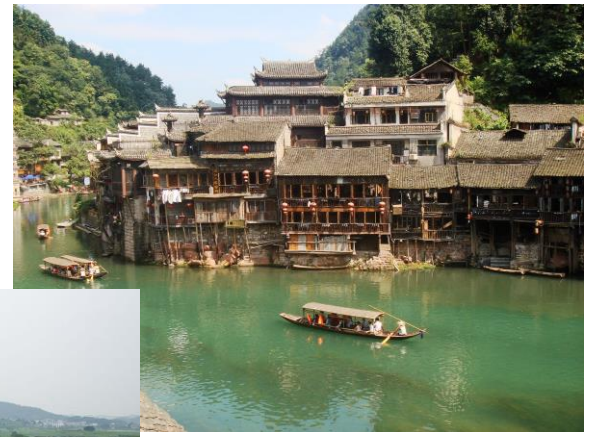


Coins of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms



Ming dynasty (1368–1644)

The Ming dynasty was founded by Zhu Yuanzhang in 1368, who proclaimed himself as the Hongwu Emperor. The capital was initially set at Nanjing, and was later moved to Beijing from Yongle Emperor's reign onward.
Urbanization increased as the population grew and as the division of labor grew more complex. Large urban centers, such as Nanjing and Beijing, also contributed to the growth of private industry. In particular, small-scale industries grew up, often specializing in paper, silk, cotton, and porcelain goods. For the most part, however, relatively small urban centers with markets proliferated around the country. Town markets mainly traded food, with some necessary manufactures such as pins or oil. At sea, the Ming became increasingly isolationist after the death of the Yongle Emperor. The treasure voyages which sailed Indian Ocean were discontinued, and the maritime prohibition laws were set in place banning the Chinese from sailing abroad.



Toghon Temur, Emperor of the Yuan Dynasty.

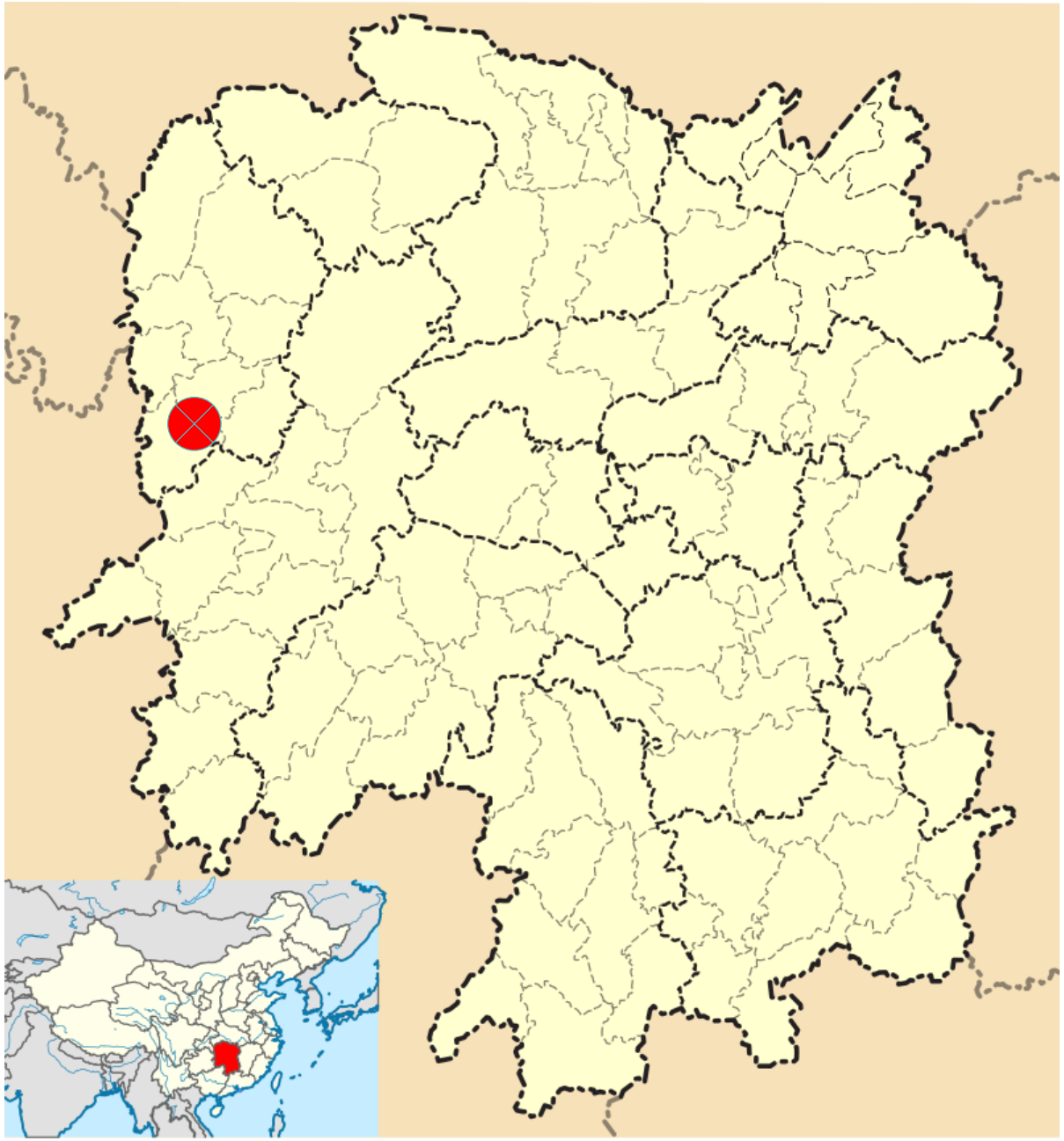
25 May 1320 – 23 May 1370), also known by his temple name as the Emperor Huizong of Yuan bestowed by the Northern Yuan dynasty and by his posthumous name as the Emperor Shun of Yuan bestowed by the Ming dynasty, was the last emperor of the Yuan dynasty and later the first emperor of the Northern Yuan dynasty. Apart from Emperor of China, he is also considered the last Khagan of the Mongol Empire. He was a son of Kusala (Emperor Mingzong). During the last years of his reign, the Yuan dynasty was overthrown by the Red Turban Rebellion, which established the Ming dynasty, although the Yuan court under his rule remained in control of northern China and the Mongolian Plateau. The remnant Yuan regime is known as the Northern Yuan in historiography. Emperor Huizong was a Buddhist student of the Karmapas (heads of the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism) and is considered a previous incarnation of the Tai Situpas. He also notably invited the Jonang savant Dölpopa Shérab Gyeltsen to teach him, but was rebuffed.

Fenghuang County, an ancient town that harbors many architectural remains of Ming and Qing styles.

Fenghuang Ancient Town

River crossing in Fenghuang Ancient Town

View of Fenghuang Ancient Town from the Red Bridge



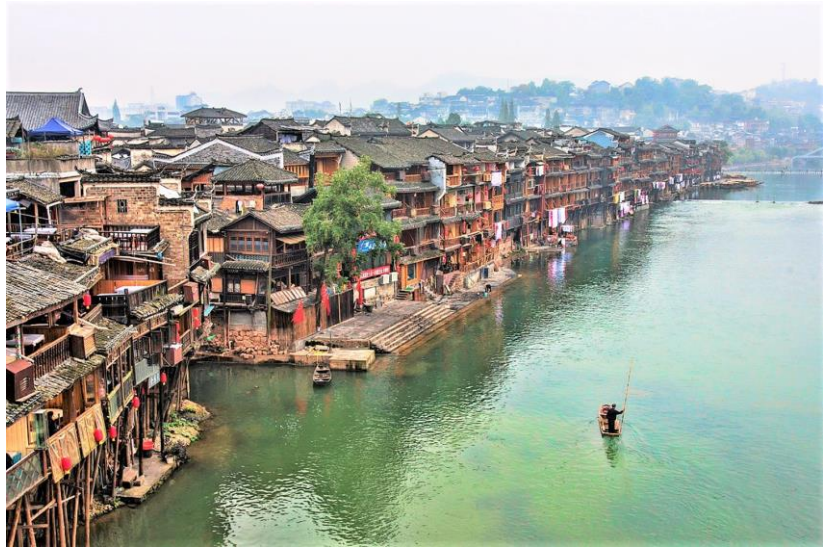
Fenghuang County

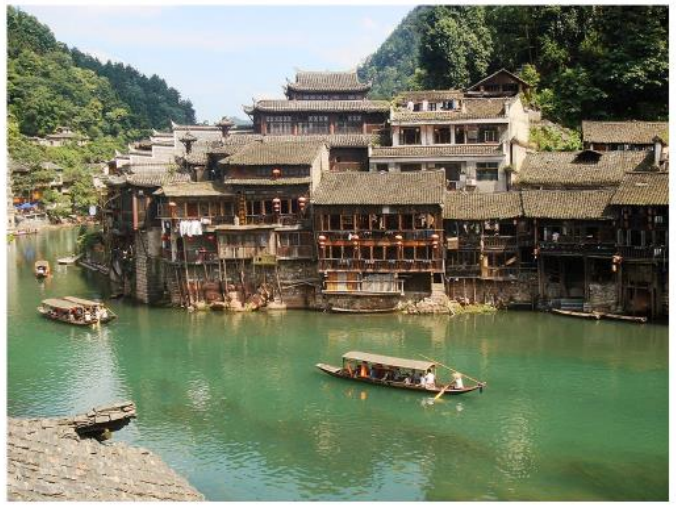
Fenghuang County), named after the mythological birds Fenghuang, is a county of Hunan Province, China, under the administration of Xiangxi Autonomous Prefecture.

Located on the western margin of the province and the southern Xiangxi, it is immediately adjacent to the eastern edge of Guizhou Province. The county is bordered to the north by Huayuan County and Jishou City, to the east by Luxi County, to the southeast by Mayang County, to the southwest and the west by Bijiang District of Tongren City and Songtao County of Guizhou. Fenghuang County covers 1,745 km2 (674 sq mi), as of 2015, It had a registered population of 428,294 and a resident population of 363,700. The county has 13 towns and four townships under its jurisdiction, the county seat is Tuojiang

Fenghuang County

Fenghuang County has an exceptionally well-preserved ancient town that harbours unique ethnic languages, customs, arts as well as many distinctive architectural remains of Ming and Qing styles. The town is placed in a mountain setting, incorporating the natural flow of the river Tuojiang into the city layout. Over half of the city's population belong to the Miao or Tujia minorities. It was the centre of the unsuccessful Miao Rebellion of 1854-73, which created a Miao diaspora in Southeast Asia during the last two centuries. The city is revered in Miao traditions and funeral rites and is the location of the Southern China Great Wall Zhōngguó Nánfāng Chángchéng; Miao: "Suav Tuam Choj"), a fortification built by the Ming dynasty to protect the local Han Chinese from Miao attacks.





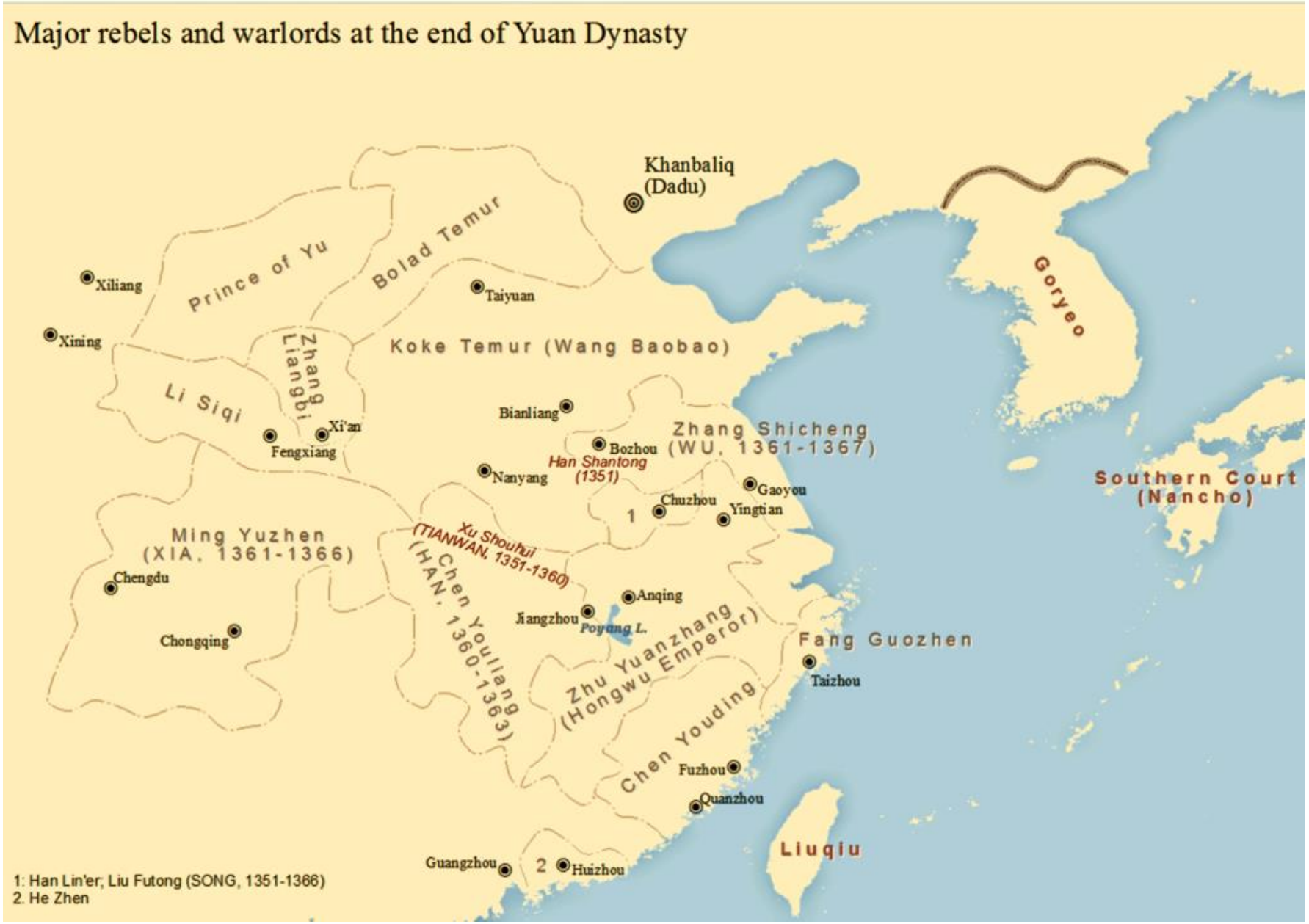
Fenghuang County, an ancient town that harbors many architectural remains of Ming and Qing styles.

Residence of the Lu Family in Dongyang, built in the Ming period.

As famine, plagues and peasant revolts increased across China proper in the 14th century, Zhu Yuanzhang rose to command the Red Turban forces that conquered China proper, ending the Mongol-led Yuan dynasty and forcing the remnant Yuan court (known as Northern Yuan in historiography) to retreat to the Mongolian Plateau.

The Ming dynasty was founded by Zhu Yuanzhang in 1368, who proclaimed himself as the Hongwu Emperor. The capital was initially set at Nanjing, and was later moved to Beijing from Yongle Emperor's reign onward. The Hongwu Emperor(21 October 1328 – 24 June 1398), personal name Zhu Yuanzhang Wade–Giles: Chu Yuan-chang), courtesy name Guorui , was the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty, reigning from 1368 to 1398.

A Seated Portrait of Ming Emperor Taizu, c. 1377 by an unknown artist from the Ming dynasty. Now located in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.



Rebels and warlords at the end of the Yuan dynasty, including the territory controlled by Zhu Yuanzhang in 1363.

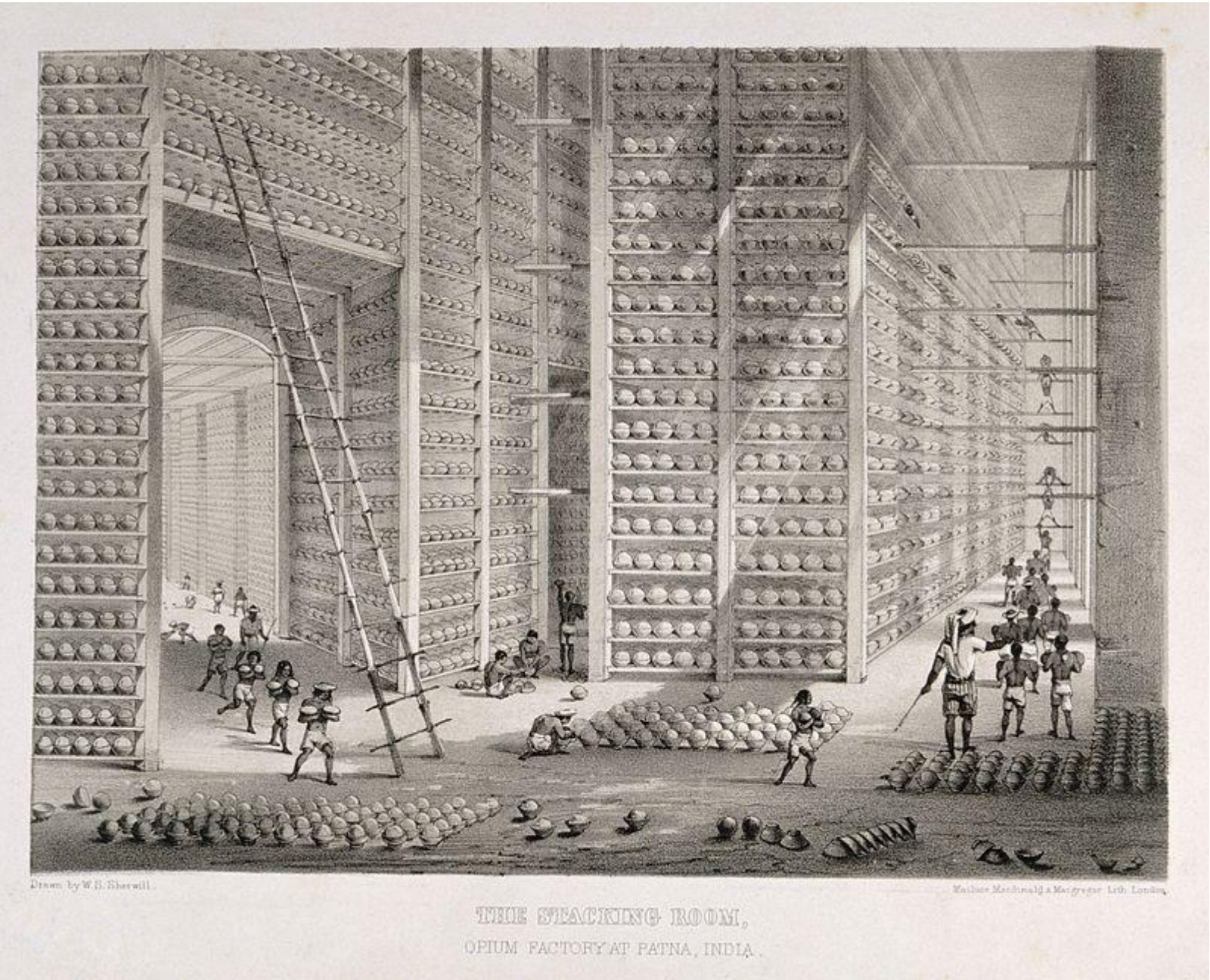
The Hongwu Emperor in his old age, c. 1397

Map showing the Nine provinces defined by Yu the Great during the legendary flood

Emperor Shun, who reigned after Yao, was so impressed by Yu's engineering work and diligence that he passed the throne to Yu instead of to his own son. Yu is said to have initially declined the throne.
He established a capital at Anyi , the ruins of which are in modern Xia County in southern Shanxi Province.

The decades of Manchu conquest caused enormous loss of lives and the economic scale of China shrank drastically. In total, the Qing conquest of the Ming (1618–1683) cost as many as 25 million lives.

By the end of Qianlong Emperor's long reign in 1796, the Qing Empire was at its zenith. The Qing ruled more than one-third of the world's population, and had the largest economy in the world. By area it was one of the largest empires ever.
In the 19th century the empire was internally restive and externally threatened by western powers.

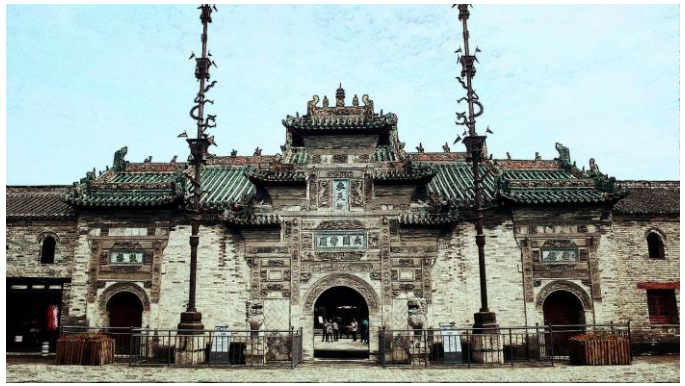


A British lithograph depicting a storehouse filled with opium at the factory of the British East India Company in Patna, India in c. 1850

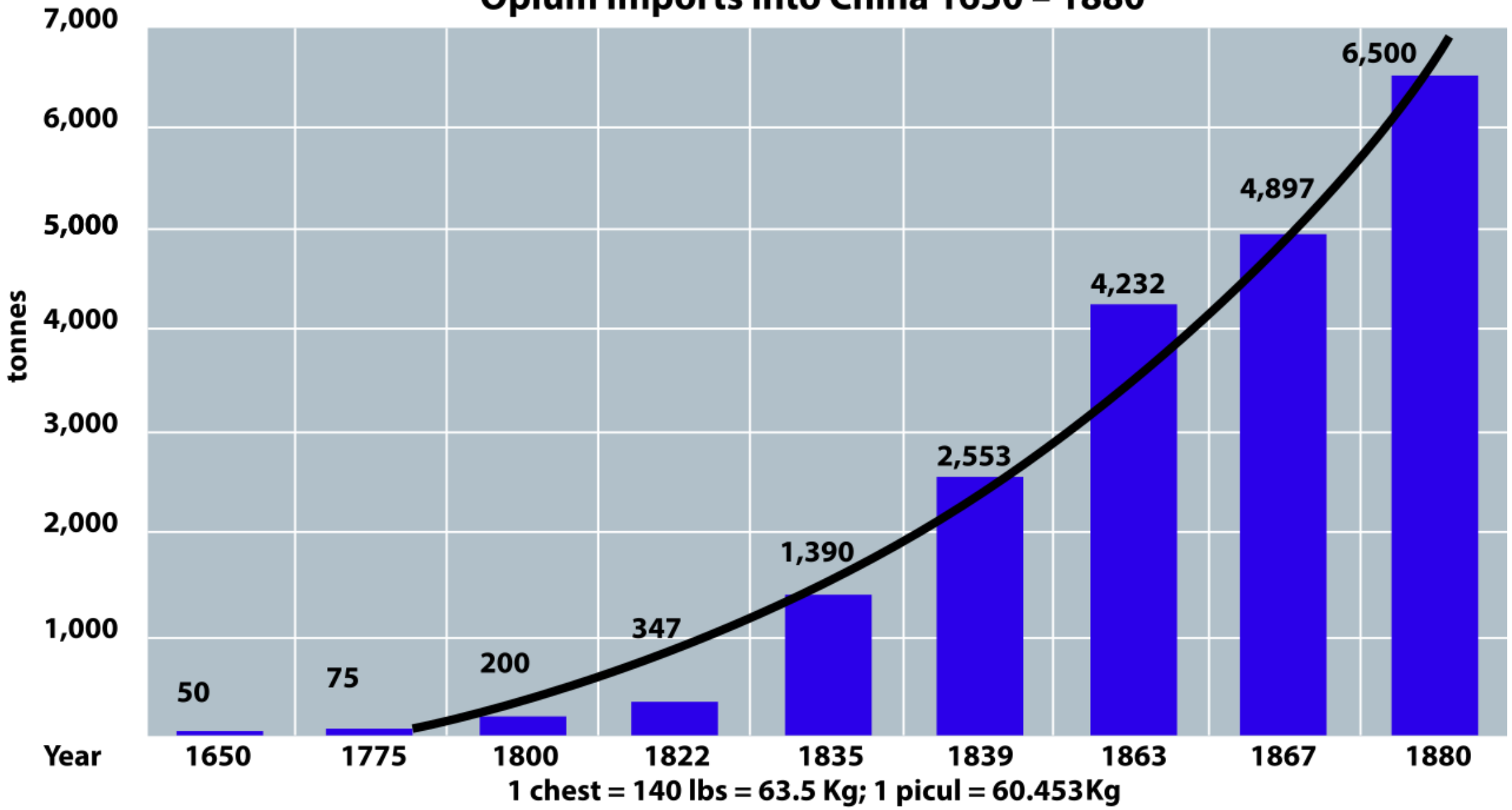
These serious social issues eventually led to the Qing government issuing an edict against the drug in 1780, followed by an outright ban in 1796, and an order from the governor of Canton to stop the trade in 1799.

Qing dynasty (1636–1912)

The Qing dynasty (1644–1912) was the last imperial dynasty in China. Founded by the Manchus, it was the second conquest dynasty to rule the entirety of China proper, and roughly doubled the territory controlled by the Ming. The Manchus were formerly known as Jurchens, residing in the northeastern part of the Ming territory outside the Great Wall. They emerged as the major threat to the late Ming dynasty after Nurhaci united all Jurchen tribes and his son, Hong Taiji, declared the founding of the Qing dynasty in 1636. The Qing dynasty set up the Eight Banners system that provided the basic framework for the Qing military conquest. Li Zicheng's peasant rebellion captured Beijing in 1644 and the Chongzhen Emperor, the last Ming emperor, committed suicide. The Manchus allied with the Ming general Wu Sangui to seize Beijing, which was made the capital of the Qing dynasty, and then proceeded to subdue the Ming remnants in the south. The decades of Manchu conquest caused enormous loss of lives and the economic scale of China shrank drastically. In total, the Qing conquest of the Ming (1618–1683) cost as many as 25 million lives.[52] The early Manchu emperors combined traditions of Central Asian rule with Confucian norms of traditional Chinese government and were considered a Chinese dynasty.



Opium Imports into China 1650 – 1880



1 chest = 140 lbs = 63.5 Kg; 1 picul = 60.453Kg

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Commissioner Lin Zexu, dubbed "Lin of Clear Skies" for his moral integrity.

By 1838, the British were selling roughly 1,400 tons of opium per year to China. Legalization of the opium trade was the subject of ongoing debate within the Chinese administration, but a proposal to legalise the narcotic was repeatedly rejected, and in 1838 the government began to actively sentence Chinese drug traffickers to death.
There were also long-term factors that pushed the Chinese government into action. Historian Jonathan D. Spence lists these factors that led to war:

the social dislocations that began to appear in the Qing world, the spread of addiction, the growth of a hard-line mentality toward foreigners, foreign refusal to accept Chinese legal norms, changes in international trade structures, and the ending of Western intellectuals' admiration for China.... When the tough prohibitions of 1838 began to take effect, the market diminished and dealers found themselves dangerously oversupplied. A second contributing factor was that the new British post of superintendent of foreign trade in China was held by a deputy the British crown..

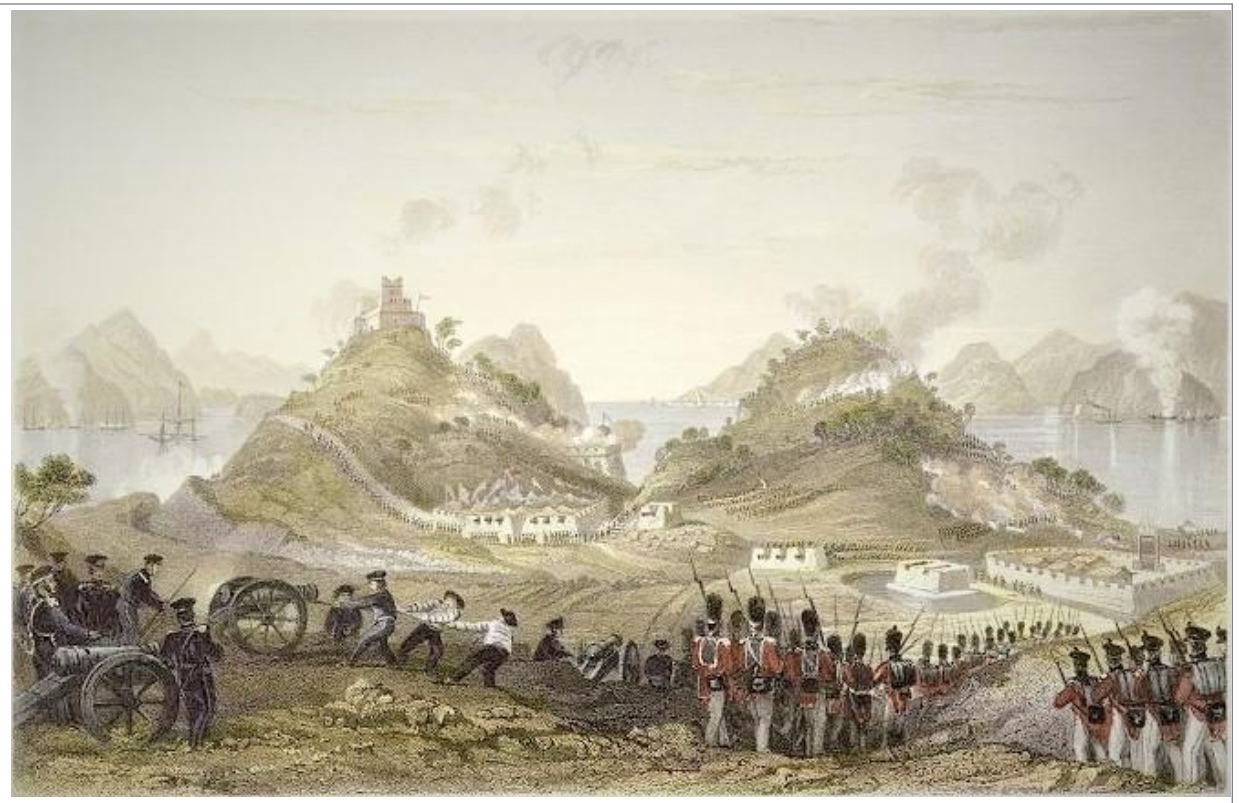
Chinese troops boarded British ships in the Pearl River and South China Sea before destroying the opium on board.[better source needed]

The British Superintendent of Trade in China, Charles Elliot, protested the decision to forcibly seize the opium stockpiles. He ordered all ships carrying opium to flee and prepare for battle. Lin responded by besieging the foreign dealers in the foreign quarter of Canton, and kept them from communicating with their ships in port.page needed] To defuse the situation, Elliot convinced the British traders to cooperate with Chinese authorities and hand over their opium stockpiles with the promise of eventual compensation for their losses by the British government. While this amounted to a tacit acknowledgment that the British government did not disapprove of the trade, it also placed a huge liability on the exchequer. The stockpile was publicly destroyed on the beach outside Canton.

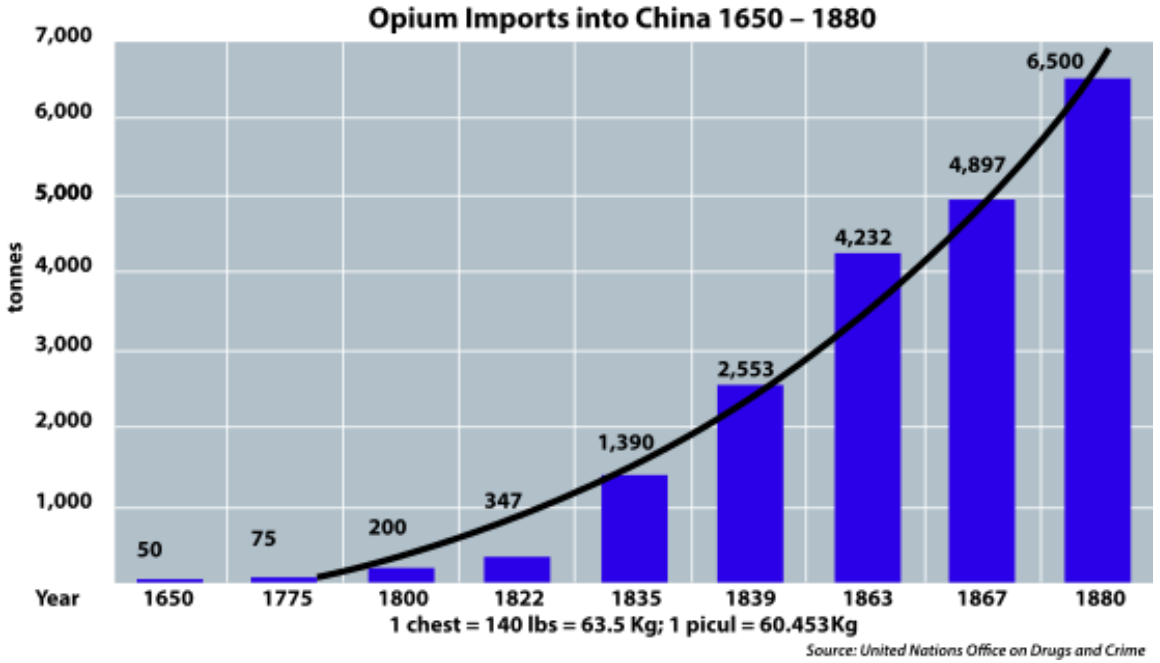
Contemporary Chinese depiction of the destruction of opium under Commissioner Lin.

In 1839, the Daoguang Emperor appointed scholar-official Lin Zexu to the post of Special Imperial Commissioner with the task of eradicating the opium trade. Lin's famous open "Letter To Queen Victoria" appealed to Queen Victoria's moral reasoning. Citing what he mistakenly understood to be a strict prohibition on opium within Great Britain, Lin questioned how Britain could declare itself moral while its merchants profited from the legal sale in China of a drug that was banned in Britain. He wrote: "Your Majesty has not before been thus officially notified, and you may plead ignorance of the severity of our laws, but I now give my assurance that we mean to cut this harmful drug forever. The letter never reached the Queen, with one source suggesting that it was lost in transit. Lin pledged that nothing would divert him from his mission, "If the traffic in opium were not stopped a few decades from now we shall not only be without soldiers to resist the enemy, but also in want of silver to provide an army. "If the traffic in opium were not stopped a few decades from now we shall not only be without soldiers to resist the enemy, but also in want of silver to provide an army."

Lin Zexu's "memorial written directly to Queen Victoria



In late June 1840 the first part of the expeditionary force arrived in China aboard 15 barracks ships, four steam-powered gunboats and 25 smaller boats. The flotilla was under the command of Commodore Bremer. The British issued an ultimatum demanding the Qing Government pay compensation for losses suffered from interrupted trade and the destruction of opium, but were rebuffed by the Qing authorities in Canton. Having captured Dinghai, the British expedition divided its forces, sending one fleet south to the Pearl River while sending a second fleet north to the Yellow Sea. While the British campaigned in the north, Qing Admiral Guan Tianpei greatly reinforced the Qing positions in Humen (Bocca Tigris), suspecting (sources state that Guan had been preparing for an eventual attack on the position since Napier's attack in 1835)



The First Opium War, also known as the Opium War or the Anglo-Sino War was a series of military engagements fought between Britain and the Qing dynasty between 1839 and 1842. The immediate issue was the Chinese seizure of private opium stocks at Canton to stop the banned opium trade, and threatening the death penalty for future offenders.

The British opium was produced in Bengal and the Ganges River Plain, where the British inherited an existing opium industry from the declining Mughal Empire and saw the product as a potentially valuable export. The East India Company commissioned and managed hundreds of thousands of poppy plantations. However, opium usage continued to grow in China, adversely affecting societal stability.

The British forces invasion and Second Capture of Chusan